



Black Chamber of Commerce

April 17, 2014

Thank you.

I want to start by saying how happy I am to be here with you today.

I am honored to address the annual meeting luncheon of the New Orleans Regional Black Chamber of Commerce.

Each of the Black Chamber's officers and members give so much to the community and today I just want to say thank you for all that you do.

Our African American businesses are and always will be a great pillar of opportunity and promise for our city.

You are the ones creating jobs - building your businesses, and in turn building New Orleans.

It is you helping the community and strengthening our neighborhoods.

It is you supporting NORD and NOLA FOR LIFE.

Your leadership helping New Orleans...

And we all know it hasn't always been easy.

Indeed, during the last four years, we have chosen the most difficult path, the path of change.

Now, we are on the right path. New Orleans is on a roll, but we must face our challenges head on. My mission: make New Orleans a city of opportunity - a safe city with a thriving and growing middle class where no one is left behind.

I know it is possible because together we have already accomplished so much, but we still have a long way to go.

To get there, I need your help, your leadership. We must stay united and continue to move forward, forward towards 2018, forward towards our 300th anniversary as a city.

Here is the question - when we reach that moment, four years from now, what will we have accomplished?

What will we have done to build a strong foundation for the future, so a child born today in New Orleans can thrive?

Your city needs you - we all have our part to play.

When I look around this room, I see a remarkable group of exceptional leaders who have already answered the call to serve.

Todd Francis, III, the outstanding Chair of the Black Chamber of Commerce and my appointment to the Aviation Board – he is helping us build our new airport.

Todd is best known as a terrifically savvy investor and the CEO of FFC Capital. But what really sets Todd apart is his big heart, his energy, and commitment to New Orleans. I feel really lucky to have him on our team at the Aviation Board.

Todd, many thanks.

Toni Hackett Antrum - New Orleans businesswoman and pillar of the community - she has helped me take on the toughest of issues as my appointment to NORA and the Board of City Trusts and co-chair of my Tax Fairness Commission.

Toni knows public finance better than anyone- I am honored to call her my friend and colleague.

I am so glad to announce today that Toni has agreed to do even more.

The Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) is finally coming out of receivership. Soon this key agency will again be under local control and Toni has agreed to be a founding member of the new HANO Advisory Board.

Thank you Toni for taking on yet another tough job on behalf of the people of New Orleans.

And there is no better person to partner with Toni lead this new era at HANO than a West Point grad with a degree from Tulane's School of Business; the President of Royal Engineers & Consultants and today's recipient of the Black Chamber's Beacon Award – Mr. Dwayne Bernal.

Dwayne tries to cut a pretty low profile, but he is always right there whether at Midnight Basketball, fixing up the neighborhood at NOLA FOR LIFE days, or otherwise doing

whatever he can to help New Orleans as my appointment to the French Market Corporation, NOLA Business Alliance, and now the new HANO Advisory Board.

Todd, Toni and Dwayne – thank you again.

In the last four years, the people in this room have led the way for the rest of us. It is you doing the hard work for our city.

It is Cheryl Teamer, the first female Chair of the Aviation Board, who is helping to build a new Airport. In fact, she is at an Aviation Board meeting right now.

It is Ray Manning providing key leadership as Sewerage and Water Board Chair helping to execute a multi-billion dollar infrastructure improvement plan.

Add those S&WB repairs to the other \$1 billion dollars hitting the ground right now - new streets, playgrounds, police and fire stations, parks and libraries – and it is clear that after years of deferred maintenance, New Orleans is finally getting the building blitz it so desperately needs.

It is great business leaders and entrepreneurs like Dwayne Boudreaux, who struggled for years after Katrina to reopen his Circle Foods Store in the Seventh Ward. And while others talked big about grocery stores, but delivered nothing, Dwayne put his head down, organized over \$7 million in funding and the city helped close the deal with another \$1 million from the Fresh Food Retailer Initiative. Now, the Circle Foods Store is back and it is a beautiful thing.

Dwayne is such a great example because he put his money where his mouth is and, with help from the people of New Orleans, he delivered. Dwayne is here today with his wonderful wife Antoinette – thank you both.

Bernell Coton is another great example. He didn't have a big name or big money, but he made it happen. He converted a blighted property into an ongoing business concern.

Just last week he had his grand opening for Galvez Goodies, a great new sweetshop in the historic Lower 9.

Dwayne and Bernell - they are doing the work – building a strong foundation for the future.

It is also Henry Coaxum doing the work. He helped create the NOLA Business Alliance and Prosperity NOLA, a five-year plan to grow the jobs of the future.

Under his leadership as the Business Alliance's first board chair, in four short years we have recreated City Hall as a catalyst for growth.

Four years, 7,300 new jobs and an unprecedented retail boom that is touching every

part of the city –Wal-Marts in New Orleans East and Gentilly, Costco on Carrollton Avenue, Mid City Market, Algiers Plaza, H&M, the Outlet Collection at Riverwalk.

Business is booming and that means new jobs. Earlier this month, 4,200 people attended a job fair to apply for the 1,600 new jobs coming to the Riverwalk, 175 were hired right there on the spot. Plus, the new JOB1 Walmart Hiring Center is blowing and going looking to find people to fill 600 new positions.

There are going to be big time opportunities at the new University Medical Center, the VA, and Methodist Hospital – hundreds jobs for doctors, administrators, and technicians. And let's not forget about the brand new airport, which will be a crucial economic driver for the region, just like the new airport was in Atlanta.

In the next four years, 13,000 new construction jobs for our City- plumbers, electricians, and carpenters. Millions more in sewerage and water investments will create thousands of new jobs. And with our job training efforts, like our new program at Delgado for water management jobs, we will cement pathways to prosperity for anyone willing to work hard and do the right thing.

Plus, world business leaders like GE Capital are moving here. That coupled with booming business at the port, a film industry with nearly a half billion dollar annual book of business, new opportunities in tech and a growing tourism base, 9 million visitors last year, the old adage is true - success builds on success – and that means more jobs.

This is the fruit of our labors and it has been you in this room tending the garden.

It is former and current RTA board chairs, Barbara Major and Sal Longoria, who along with RTA CEO Justin Augustine drove the streetcar line down Loyola Avenue, they helped save the Algiers Ferry and found a way to expand bus service.

With their help – we are thinking big.

Soon another RTA streetcar will move up Rampart Street from Canal and its' all part of a nearly \$3 billion public/private redevelopment of the Iberville and Treme neighborhoods.

With help from Barbara, Sal and Justin, it is all coming together for that neighborhood - new HANO housing at the Lafitte and Iberville, NORD's Treme Center, Armstrong Park, the Circle Foods Store, Craig Elementary, the University Medical Center, the new VA, and last month we broke ground on the Lafitte Greenway, 2.6 miles from Congo Square to the bayou on a beautiful linear park/bike path with retail development to follow

It is going to be nice.

How nice is the Lafitte Greenway going to be?

Well, go check out Crescent Park if you want another example of the world-class public

space we are building.

And here again we have leaders amongst you – the French Market Corporation has agreed to manage this new outstanding public space on the river and it is French Market Board President Demetric Mercadel in the lead, helping to make it all happen. Thank you Demetric.

Another great example of your remarkable leadership is on the issue of blight.

Four years ago, I made a pledge to fight the blight choking the life out of our neighborhoods. The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) with their Board Chair Jim Singleton and outstanding Executive Director Jeff Hebert has played a big part in these efforts.

The results speak for themselves - we went from having the worst blight problem in America to tearing down or fixing up blight faster here than anywhere else. Four years, we've reduced over 10,000 blighted units.

But it is not all about bulldozing and demo, it's about bringing property back into commerce. Now, the \$52 million Soft Seconds Program is fighting the blight, and helping hundreds of families realize the American dream and build generational wealth through home ownership.

A major player in this effort has been Fred Johnson, CEO of the Neighborhood Development Foundation (NDF). Fred helps these first time Soft Seconds homebuyers navigate the complex home buying process. Through it all Fred is there – reviewing credit applications, talking about maintenance costs, and giving advice about what to look for in a house.

Our team in City Hall led by Cedric Grant, Brian Lawlor and 5 other incredibly dedicated, long time city employees has been national recognized for turning this program around.

The result – over 600 families now own a piece of New Orleans, all because of the Soft Seconds program.

Thank you all.

But it is in New Orleans East, throughout the Read Boulevard corridor, that the steadfast leadership of those gathered here today truly comes to the fore. The \$173 million Methodist Hospital is scheduled to open this summer, but it wouldn't have happened without the blood, sweat and tears of Hospital Service District Board Chair Ronnie Burns along with our new Executive Director Mario Garner. And we're hiring – 120 new healthcare jobs.

Just up the road from the new Methodist Hospital is Joe W. Brown Park, which in the last few years has enjoyed a \$30 million renaissance – new pool, new track, new gym,

new football field and tennis courts, new walking paths and playing fields.

And it is NORD Commission Board Chair Roy Glapion and NORD Director Vic Richard who have poured their heart and soul into the park, helping to doggedly pursue extra money from Nike and the Sugar Bowl so our kids would have the best of the best.

Also on Read Blvd – the nearly \$8 million New Orleans East Regional Library – one of five new libraries citywide that New Orleans Public Library Board Chair Bunny Charbonnet and Executive Director Charles Brown helped make happen.

Just a short four years ago, none of these projects in the East were moving forward and it is because of your leadership that we have made so much progress. We are moving forward.

Many, many thanks.

Also, in the last four years, with help from many business leaders here today we ramped up JOB1 summer employment. Since taking office, we've doubled the number of summer jobs for kids and rapidly expanded the number of job sites.

Plus, we built the long promised One-Stop Shop for permitting, which has cut permit-processing times by 30%. In some cases, paper work that used to take days to process between departments now takes minutes. In fact, we now process permits faster than any other parish in the region.

We are getting better and I want to thank all the business people in the room today who have worked with us to build and continuously improve One-Stop Shop.

One thing is for sure, at City Hall we want to have a big impact.

Our entrepreneurs and small business leaders told us they needed capital to expand and training to make the most out of every day and every dollar.

So, in the last four years, we've secured new capital funding and support - over **\$20 million** in small business loans and business training from the Goldman Sachs' 10,000 Small Businesses program. 270 local small businesses have participated.

Nearly half have already created new jobs and about 2/3rds have seen an increase in their revenue. That's a big deal.

On top of that, in partnership with Newcorp, the Small Business Assistance Fund has made nearly \$2 million in low interest loans available to local small business people like Derrick Tabb at Roots of Music. Plus, now we have launched a big new partnership between the City, ESSENCE Fest and Chevron - it's called PowerMoves.NOLA, which seeks to create new opportunities for minority entrepreneurs looking to start or expand a business.

I am happy to see many of our small business leaders with us today.

There is Nathaniel Scales - this young man has built his landscaping company, Garden Doctors, into a great success. He shows us what is possible when talent and dedication meets new opportunities, new funding and new training.

Spears Consulting founder Cleveland Spears was another participant in Goldman's 10,000 Small Businesses program. Besides being a savvy businessman, Cleveland is committed to making New Orleans a great place to live and do business. He is a true leader and we are lucky to have him.

Kendall Washington's business was destroyed by Katrina. But this young man didn't let up. He just kept going, kept on working and when Goldman Sachs came knocking he was ready to seize the moment. Today his business, Safe Spot Pest Control, is back and better than ever.

And finally, here are St. Aug grads Jon and Jomarque Renthrope and Adam Dawson, who started the Cajun Fire Brewing Company. This team is on the cusp of something big and last month beat out over a dozen other start-ups to win \$50,000 at Entrepreneur Week's Big Idea contest.

Stand up and be recognized.

Let's give all these outstanding business people a big round of applause.

These are remarkable stories. New Orleans is a city of opportunity with a thriving and growing middle class.

But our success is not a fait accompli; we must face our challenges head on. We still have work to do.

From the rich soil of New Orleans comes our great prides – our people, our close nit neighborhoods, our Second Lines, our cooking, and music.

But from this same fertile ground, from this same remarkable place grows a poisonous fruit – the fruit of violence.

No one in New Orleans should live in fear. Without safety there is no freedom. The fight against crime and murder on the streets of New Orleans is my top priority.

Together, in the last four years we have run towards the fire and taken on this toughest of issues. In 2010, New Orleans was America's murder capital, but no more, in 2013 murder hit a historic nearly 30 year low. Now we need to make New Orleans a murder free city. We can get there.

Already this year – murder is down 25% compared to last year - down 48% from 2011.

Many thanks to our outstanding US Attorney for the Eastern District Kenneth Polite and Urban League Executive Director Ericka McConduit-Diggs and Hyatt General Manager Michael Smith for their continued support of our comprehensive murder reduction strategy NOLA FOR LIFE.

Together, they have added their voices to a growing chorus who have come together in unison to say to those committing violence in our communities - enough!

We demand - stop the shooting.

Stop the murder.

Stop the killing of men, women and children.

Stop the madness.

We must focus on prevention.

We must create jobs, build better schools, and form stronger communities

We must especially focus on connecting our young African American men with new opportunities.

Because without safety, there is no freedom, but without opportunity there is no life.

This is our calling and the primary mission of my second term – we cannot leave anyone behind.

And the truth is that right now many of our fellow citizens are struggling.

It is shocking that 52% of African American men in New Orleans are not working. It is unacceptable. We cannot stop until we fix this problem.

Too many people just aren't included in this circle of prosperity and we can't just talk a big game about expanding opportunities; we need to back up the talk with action.

Here is what we are doing.

Earlier this month we introduced a package of reforms to make the City of New Orleans a great place to work. Among the changes are several Civil Service rule changes to improve the hiring and evaluation process, increase training opportunities, and allow managers more flexibility in giving performance-based promotions.

But a core component of the initiative is increasing the minimum wage for City employees to \$10.10. That move would affect nearly 200 employees.

I am committed to paying our hard working public employees a living wage so they have a paycheck that supports their families and provides more economic security.

Furthermore, to reduce barriers to employment, we've worked on re-entry programs so those previously incarcerated can get jobs. And at City Hall, we've taken the lead on this issue—"banning the box" so that those previously incarcerated get a fair shot.

Many here with us have already provided great leadership on this issue, and today I ask all the business owners in the room to 'ban the box' where a job applicant must list their criminal record. Allow the formerly incarcerated to at least get a foot in the door so they can explain their past.

It is simple and it is something each of you can do today.

We are not just talking the talk - we are walking the walk to expand opportunities for everyone in New Orleans.

Here is what we are doing to create opportunities for DBE firms.

First of all, when I came into office in 2010 the DBE program was not only broken, but it had been abandoned, and a lot of folks in this city didn't really understand why the program was so important.

I believe that an ambitious DBE goal for city contracts is a must. In fact, an effective city DBE program is the cornerstone of my strategy to build local, minority owned businesses and strengthen the middle class.

So, one of the first things I did after entering office was completely reform the contracting process for the City and our boards and commissions.

With the stroke of a pen, we leveled the playing field. Now contracts are awarded based on what you know, not who you know.

We expanded the Office of Supplier Diversity from 1 to 6 staffers and with City Council and in partnership with groups like The Collaborative and community leaders like Barbara Major we passed an ordinance that toughened DBE compliance laws for City contractors.

Now, we want to institutionalize all this work and will make permanent all our DBE contracting reforms by enshrining them in the City Charter. We are ready to move forward.

These reforms are getting great results. We are seeing remarkable success.

In four years, we increased the number of certified DBEs eligible for City work by **70%**.

In four years, **\$450** million in DBE contracts awarded by the City, S&WB, RTA and the airport.

Big time projects with big time DBE participation.

- Joe Brown Park Katrina repairs, 35% DBE participation;
- West End Park, 35% DBE participation;
- Gallier Hall Repairs, 36% DBE participation;
- Cita Hubbell Library, 35% DBE participation;
- The Milne Boys Home abatement, 35% DBE participation;
- The new Juvenile Justice Center, 35% DBE participation;
- Costco Infrastructure Improvements, 40% DBE participation;
- Gernon Brown Community Center, 40% DBE participation;
- The Lafitte Greenway, 35% DBE participation.
- Methodist Hospital, 35% DBE participation.

We've got Ronnie Burns doing great work as a prime on a big contract at the Airport.

Glenda McKinley with her business GMc + Company Advertising is a great example of how a small DBE firm can thrive as a Prime. She is doing great work at the airport and with NOLA FOR LIFE.

Then there is Larry Oney who is also working as a Prime with the city and at RTA. In fact, Larry's business is booming and he is getting new jobs from all over the country.

And Iam Tucker –another Prime DBE contractor who is working on several city and S&WB projects.

Not to mention Jimmie Woods and Alvin Richard have one of the biggest contracts the city has to offer and work all day every day to keep New Orleans clean.

Let me tell you - the opportunity is real and the opportunity is now. So spread the word.

Get certified as a city contractor qualified for DBE work.

Get partners to expand your capacity and improve your chances of winning bids.

Get competitive – we are looking for the best and brightest and with all these outstanding business people you've got to bring it to win a contract in this town.

We also are committed to expanding our work with DBE compliance and holding contractors accountable for following the law.

Now, staff from our Office of Supplier Diversity conducts site visits on active city projects. That work in the field, along with new reporting requirements help the City better monitor contractors. In fact, I just granted the Office of Supplier Diversity unprecedented power over the city's departmental payment system.

Now, they can verify payments made by the city to Prime contractors, thus enabling us to better enforce prompt payment of DBEs in accordance to the law.

But it is not all about enforcement, we want to make it easy for DBEs to bid for city work and open up the process to everybody. So we improved our website and in the coming year you're going to see my people from the Office of Supplier Diversity all the over the place at outreach sessions and training workshops.

Indeed, just last week over 100 DBE contractors came to the pre-proposal conference for airport construction projects. It was a great event.

I strongly encourage you all, take advantage of the upcoming networking events and trainings.

Another thing we've really worked hard to do is ensure that local residents are the ones taking advantage of all the new opportunities in the city.

Our partnership with Costco is a great example of what we are doing.

We wanted Costco to hire from the areas of Gert Town and Hollygrove surrounding the store. So, JOB1 hosted public meetings about the new jobs and over 600 local residents showed up looking to apply. JOB1 even set up a mobile recruitment unit in the neighborhood and JOB1 career centers were opened up to Costco recruitment.

Now, everyone is a winner.

65% of Costco's workers are New Orleans residents.

Costco has found terrific, friendly workers who will call you baby when you walk in the door, and all that salary, benefits and tax revenue stays right here in New Orleans.

This is only the beginning. We need to make sure all our new retail businesses are hiring local. To this end, just last month we announced a new partnership with Wal-Mart to help facilitate the hiring of local residents at their new stores in Gentilly and New Orleans East.

I always say 'the people of New Orleans will be the ones to rebuild New Orleans' and this is what I am talking about.

And my entire team at City Hall is ready to work with you to take all this work to the next level.

Here is the city's Deputy Mayor and Chief of Staff Judy Reese Morse along with Deputy Mayor of Infrastructure Cedric Grant; the city's Senior Advisor for Economic Development Aimee Quirk; Health Commissioner Charlotte Parent; the Director for the Office of Supplier Diversity Arkebia Matthews; Director of JOB1, Nadiyah Coleman; the terrific CEO of the NOLA Business Alliance, Rod Miller; NORA Executive Director Jeff

Hebert; the Director of the Bloomberg Innovation Delivery Team Charles West; the Director of the Livable Claiborne Communities Initiative Ashleigh Gardere; the new head of the City Planning Commission Bob Rivers; Director of Place Based Development Bill Gilchrist; and Vic Richard who does a great job as head of NORD.

Please stand.

I often say that New Orleans' great strength is her diversity, and that diversity is well represented on your City Hall team and in the outstanding business and community leaders who have been working so hard - for free –helping to build a strong foundation for the future.

It is all the work of this big team - the work of so many, many of you that make it all possible.

Thank you, thank you.

...And I hope that you've got some gas left in the tank...

Now we are at an essential moment where the road diverges from what has been to what can be.

It is in these seasons of change where we must make a choice – keep going or turn back.

If it wasn't already clear, let me say it here and now - New Orleans is moving forward.

Make no mistake – during the last four years, we have chosen the most difficult path, the path of change, and are on the right path.

Now, New Orleans is on a roll, but we face major challenges that we must take head on.

My mission is for New Orleans to be a city of opportunity - a safe city with a thriving and growing middle class.

To get there, I need your continued leadership and engagement.

We must stay united and continue to move forward, forward towards 2018, forward towards our 300th anniversary as a city.

I am really excited about what comes next, but I need your help.

So, answer the call of service.

Answer the call - give time to and support NOLA FOR LIFE initiatives like Ban the Box.

Answer the call – this summer, hire one or more of the 2,000 local young people participating in our YouthWorks Summer Jobs program. You'll not only get an enthusiastic employee, but also the opportunity to help mold the next generation of New Orleans workers and entrepreneurs.

Answer the call – let's work together and take on our toughest problems.

Because so many of you have answered the call of service, today New Orleans is strong, resting on the core bedrock of our unique culture, our diversity and, above all, our uncompromising optimism and belief in God and the future.

Today, New Orleans is on a roll; let's keep it rolling and press on.

Thank you again and God Bless.